

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 9 and 11 are currently being prosecuted. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider his rejections in view of the amendments and remarks as set forth below.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

It is gratefully acknowledged that the Examiner considers the subject matter of claims 9 and 11 as being allowable. Although not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejections, the remaining claims have been canceled. Accordingly, claims 9 and 11 are now in condition for allowance.

ENTRY OF AMENDMENT

The Examiner has indicated that claims 9 and 11 are allowable. By way of the present amendment, Applicants have canceled the remaining claims. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the present amendment places the application in *prima facie* condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of the amendment and allowance of the application is considered proper and is respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 3-5, 12 and 14-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over JP -988523 in view of Mitsui (U.S. Patent No. 4,086,981). This rejection is respectfully traversed. Since all of these claims have now been canceled, this rejection is rendered moot.

Claims 6 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being obvious over JP-988523 in view of Mitsui and further in view of Regueiro (U.S. Patent No. 5,339,446). This rejection is respectfully traversed. These claims have also been canceled rendering this rejection moot as well.

Conclusion

Since only allowable claims remain in the application, Applicants submit that the application is now fully in condition for allowance. Accordingly, an early and favorable action is respectfully requested.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Robert F. Gnuse (Reg. No. 27,295) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

Appl. No. 09/714,144

Amendment filed June 28, 2004

Final Office Action dated April 1, 2004

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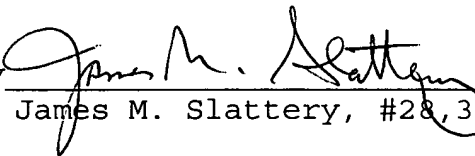
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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment(s)